

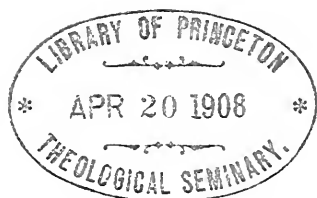


The **BOY JESUS**

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CORTLAND MYERS



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The Boy Jesus



THE BOY JESUS

The Boy Jesus

By ✓

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“Making a Life,” “The New Evangelism”

“Why Men Do Not Go to Church,” etc.



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TO
MY BOY

Cortland Myers, Jr.

AT WHOSE REQUEST THIS BOOK
WAS MADE

THE AUTHOR

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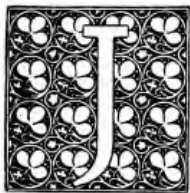
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The Boy Jesus

II

The Real Boy



ESUS was a real boy. He lived in the boy's world, and the boy's kind of life. He looked through the eyes of a boy. He ran with the feet of a boy. He threw with the arm of a boy. He heard just as other boys hear, and felt just as other boys feel. He was a genuine boy—a perfect boy, but a boy, the best-looking, feeling, speaking, acting boy the world ever saw—just the kind of a boy whom every other boy at his best would want to be like. He grew from a little child slowly up into a man, the same as other boys grow, and he learned things in the way in which every boy learns them. He grew in size and wisdom and in favor with God and men. The Bible thought that was enough to say about him, and it was a great deal. That would be the greatest thing

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to say about any one. I wonder if any boy could not have that said about him if he tried hard to be a boy such as Jesus was.

When Jesus came into our world, there were some things which marked him as more than a boy, but these things did not take him out of the boy's life. He was born under that brilliant, dazzling star of Bethlehem, and all the prophets were interested in his coming to the earth. The wise men came to the cradle to tell that God was in his life. The angels came from the skies with their holy message that Jesus was to be the world's Saviour and Lord. He came from heaven, and lived the life of a boy, and then of a man, just to show us what God was like, and that he was willing to die to save us; but all this did not change his boy life.

Some people attempted long after he had gone back to heaven to make his boyhood days strange and unlike the life of others. They said he was playing with some other boys one day, and they were making birds out of clay, that is things which they called birds, but probably did not look much like these little singers, and while Jesus and the others were making them and fixing them on a board to dry, suddenly he touched them, and these imaginary birds moved and began to sing and raised their wings and flew away. Another time they said he went into a dyer's shop and took the clothes lying on his counter and threw them into the fire, and after the dyer became angry and threatened him, he

just turned toward the burning clothes and made a motion with his hand, and brought the clothes out of the flames all dyed in the color their owner wished. They also said he was one day in his father's carpenter shop, and saw a throne for the king of Jerusalem on which his father had been working for two years. Now they found that it was two spans too short. He motioned to his father and took hold of one side while his father took hold of the other side and they easily pulled it to the right size. There is another of these strange stories which tells how one day another boy was hunting for partridge eggs, and out of the nest came a serpent's head, and its poisonous fangs pierced his hand. He screamed with fright and pain and they carried him to his home. His friends carried him to Jesus. The boy Jesus then said, "Take us back to the nest where he was bitten," and they did. When they came to the place Jesus commanded the snake to come out of its nest and with its own mouth draw forth the poison from the wound. One day they said he was playing on the housetop with some other children when one of them was shoved from the roof and fell to the ground and died. Some of the other boys said Jesus did it. And then the boy Christ said, "Charge not me with the crime, but let us leave it to the dead child to say who did it," and then Jesus said, "Zeimineus, Zeimineus, who threw thee down from the housetop?" Then the dead boy said, "Not thee, but such a

The Boy Jesus

one did," and all the people looked in amazement, and charged the other boy with the crime.

All these stories do not sound like his boy life, and the Bible does not tell anything of them. If they were true it would have said something about it, but God wanted us to know his real life, just as it was, and just the life the true boy lived. We do not want to take him away from the boyhood days with all their growth and goodness. Anyway, we are very sure of this, that Jesus was a boy, and the kind of boy whom every other boy must admire. He knows now just how to sympathize with boys and help them, because he was one of them. He knows just what boys like. Blessed is the boy who knows what Jesus likes, and tries his level best to live that kind of life.

III

Where He Lived



ESUS lived among the hills. Nazareth was like a clear, white, sparkling diamond, set in the circle of the mountains. It was just beyond the edge of a beautiful plain, which was always covered with the richest of the harvest and the orchard. The village overlooked this great garden. The roadway which came out of the level country reached Nazareth by a narrow, steep, and rough mountain path, over which they had to bring all their grain and fruits on the backs of camels and mules or their own backs. This was a very difficult task, but the traveler who climbs this same hill road almost forgets how hard it is in the first sight of the place where Jesus lived as a boy. So steep and dangerous is the narrow roadway, that some travelers fall off of their horses and injure themselves in the fall on the rocks, and frighten their friends because of the danger on the edge of the precipice. Nazareth is the best of all the towns now in Palestine. Its location

The Boy Jesus

has always been the best. It has just nestled among the hills all these years like a bird in its nest.

Who would not be anxious to see this place where the boy Jesus lived? Who would not be happy to look on some of the very same things he looked upon and lived among. He walked over the same roads and played on the same hills and drank from the same stream and looked at the same stars, and many other things are now just as they were when he was there. Even the manner of life has changed very little, and some of it not at all. To stand on that side-hill, or to climb to the top of one of the high hills and look out over that fertile plain and the other mountains must have been a part of his joy. The slopes were all covered with green grass and many kinds of flowers with many colors, red and pink and white and yellow and blue flowers, rockrose, lily of the field, red tulip, orchids, wild geraniums, and a great quantity of Palestine golden flower, odd and beautiful plants in abundance, and some of our own kinds of flowers. Jesus picked our carnations and others which you have made into a bouquet. Then he saw the great valley all divided into small fields, with fences of cacti and stones to mark the line, not like great farms and fields, but more like gardens. He could look out of his home and see the streets rise in terraces on the hillside. He could see the flat-roofed houses, and the families on them, and sometimes the children playing there. They

spent much of their time on the roof, and he too had many a play in that same place. Their houses were so different from ours. They were built with a flat roof and very low, and an open space in the rear. The walls were made of heavy yellowish white stone, which always sparkled, and were almost dazzling in the sunshine. These houses had many fig trees, and orange trees, and olive trees, and cypress trees, and others around them. They were separated by small gardens. In these trees and gardens were many birds of many kinds, most beautiful in color and sweet in song. They made the world a great music hall, and the concert was always going on. Their songs must have thrilled the heart of Jesus who watched them flit across the open and above the houses to find their nests and little ones. He saw the dove as you have seen it. He listened to the lark sing her sweet song and the thrush warble her rich notes. When the evening came and the shadows fell he heard the nightingale in her special bird music. When Jesus walked along the hillside the brightest-winged butterflies were on the flowers and flying across his path. Undoubtedly he took off his hat and tried to catch them. He must have wanted to get a closer look at them. Every boy has run after a butterfly, and of course Jesus did too.

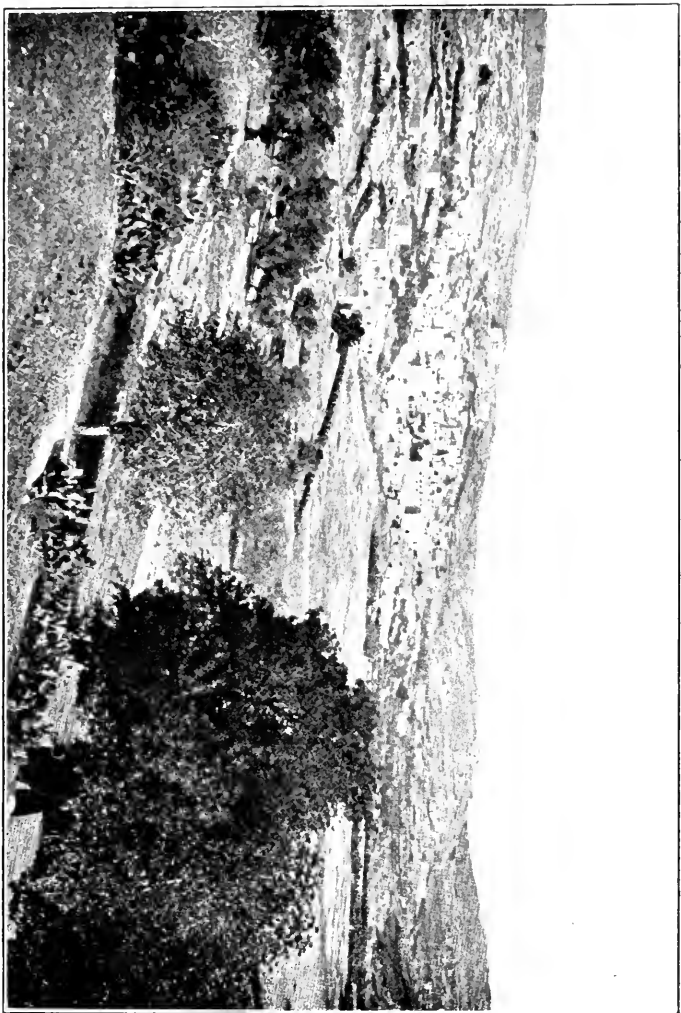
On those hillsides were many flocks of sheep. These and their shepherds helped to make his world, and he enjoyed being with them and watching their clipping

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of the grass and finding the best place. He helped them to find it sometimes, and he must have helped the shepherd too. He listened to the stories of the shepherd and the strange music from his pipe.

Down from one of the hillsides and through the valley a brook flowed, the only one in all that part of the country. Jesus was often by its spring and along the stream. There was much here to see, and always a great place for play. Everybody came to this fountain, and there were always boys and girls there.

Nazareth was on the great caravan roadway, and many travelers were always coming and going. They stopped there and stayed there as they passed through. Jesus must have seen many strange people and strange scenes. This was one of the most interesting parts of his boyhood life. Some of them came from Galilee, and some of them from Jerusalem and the south, and some of them from the north, and some from the sea-coast. It was a center of life and commerce. This foreign traffic may have had something to do with the stain which some people place on the name of Nazareth, and also with the roughness of some of its people. Jesus had to live among this kind of people just as many boys have to do to-day in their town or work or school or even home, and yet he did not become like the rough people, but stayed gentle and true and noble and good. He showed other boys what they could do no matter where they had to live.



NAZARETH—WHERE JESUS LIVED

If you went to Nazareth to-day, what kind of looking people would you see? How do they dress? Just about the same as they did when Jesus was there. The men and boys wear a short cloak, a bright-colored handkerchief of cloth folded in three corners and thrown over their heads so as to fall over the neck and shoulders. The women wear a white veil and silk dress and broad scarf and many colored trousers, blue and yellow and green and red. People there wore more white and less color when Jesus was a boy. If the clothes were white, they were made so white that they said no one could make them whiter. Sometimes now the women and girls have only a long blue garment tied in around the waist, a bonnet of red cloth and around it a chain of silver coins, and over it all a veil or shawl of white cotton cloth is thrown. The kind and color of clothes do not make a people. They were just the same as men and women and boys and girls are to-day.

This place where Jesus lived as a boy must have had a good many things beautiful about it, but we would scarcely know there ever had been or was such a place on earth if Jesus had not lived there. The place where a boy lives cannot make the boy. Every boy makes his own life and his own kind of a world.



In School



WID Jesus go to school and did he like it? He went to school and liked it about the same as most other boys liked it. Some things about it were pleasant, and some other things did not please him so well. He liked the holiday and the vacation times too. He learned the same as other boys must learn. He knew a hard lesson when it came to him, and perhaps would rather have an easy one, but he saw the great need of his school life, and tried his best to get all the knowledge he could. He studied hard and lived a good boy's motto, "Work and win." Some things about his school were not the same as yours, but the study and the work have always been the same and must always be. It is said he grew in wisdom, and no boy can ever grow in wisdom without study, and good hard study.

Jesus learned a great deal before he went to school. His father and mother gave him many lessons, and tried to have him know as much as possible. They



JESUS IN SCHOOL

felt it their duty to teach him as well as to feed his body and clothe him. So when he went to school he was better ready for the teacher and the higher lessons.

In his school the arrangement was for the teacher to sit on a raised seat, while the boys sat on the floor or sometimes stood. They were arranged in a half-circle, the younger ones in the first row and the older ones back of them according to their ages. They did not have books as we have them now. Sometimes the lesson was from the Jewish law and was written out, and each one learned it to repeat with the others. Most of their study was in the law, and to commit it to memory, and then to advance to other books concerning the law as they made progress in the school. Much of it was repeated to them by the teacher, and they were to learn and remember it by saying it after him. In his class there were probably twenty-five scholars. If there were ever more than that they had to have two teachers. The great thing for a boy then was to have a good memory, and to train it to do wonderful things. Everything was to be memorized, and the method was to repeat it over and over again in school, then to repeat it at home, and to think about it many other times until it was fastened so that it could never be forgotten.

Jesus carried it home with him the same as you do your home work, and he said it over and over again. He went by himself to get his work done, and shut

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his eyes and just thought about that one thing until he knew it, and when he was sure of it he felt happy, just as every other boy feels when he has his lesson. He said many times to his mother and father "I know it. Now see if I can say it without hesitating once. I can say it as well as the teacher." He always did his studying first and then felt free to do other things. The pleasure would have been spoiled by thinking about what he had to do. If it was done, then he was free and his heart light. If a boy has a great load of books or lessons on his back he cannot run or do anything as he ought to. Take the load off and he straightens up for the best his world can give him. He is a wise boy who gives first place to his study. Men say "Business first and pleasure afterward." If that is good for grown-up boys, it is good for regular boys too.

Jesus kept first things first. The most important part of his life was not pushed back, but kept right in the front. He studied his best while he was at it, and then he learned it and found pleasure in it and enjoyed everything else better too. To delay it and delay it until you are tired is to dread it and take twice as long to get it and then not remember it. Jesus took it as one of the best parts of life and put the best into it. He gave his attention strictly to everything the teacher said, and in this way made it easier for himself and the teacher both. He thought it a

great art to know how to fasten his attention. That is the way to learn and to remember. To fasten our attention on anything is to fasten it in memory. If any boy wants to be a good scholar he must fix his whole mind on the one lesson he is trying to learn. To pay strict attention is the great secret, and Jesus knew it. He must have had a splendid memory because he showed it when he became a man. All those things he learned in school he knew twenty years after, because when a boy he learned to hold his thinking to one point. He never did as many boys do now, try to study their lesson while they are thinking about a hundred other things, and the next day fail when they come to recite, and in a little time forget they ever had a lesson. Jesus was always saying "I will do this one thing and do it well, and remember it as long as I live."

Jesus always learned much by the way in which he looked at everything. He saw it, he saw it all the way through, and saw it just as it was. Many boys see, and yet they never see. That sounds strange, yet it is so true. To be observing and see what you look at is a large part of education. This not only makes a boy understand all things, but whatever he sees he commits to memory to keep for him forever. To look at a bird and see not only a bird, but a certain kind of a bird, its color, its size, its shape, its peculiar song, how it flies, and all about it, is to know that

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bird the next time, and know it from other birds, and to know more about your world than you ever knew before. This is the way Jesus looked at everything, and tried to learn something from everything. He was doing all his study for a purpose, and that brightened all his boy days. He was working not only to know more, but to be more for his world and for other people. He wanted to become the most so that he could help others the most. Educated to serve was his thought and desire. It does not make any difference what a boy means to be when he becomes a man. This same purpose ought to be his while he is in school, to make the most out of himself, so that he can do the most for others, and learn the most so that he can give the most. Jesus began to work this out in his school. Many times he walked to school with another boy and told him the part of the lesson he did not know; or when another boy came to his house they sat down together and Jesus helped him out and made him happy. He was always looking out for the dull boy, and when he could honestly help him, and not do anything the teacher told him not to do, he was glad to do it.

Another thing Jesus must often have done in his school days when the lesson was very hard and something in it he could not understand. He must have bowed his head and asked his heavenly Father to show him. Why not pray over a hard lesson just as

well as over anything else in this world? When a good boy has done his best God is waiting to help him. Jesus knew this and many times had his prayer answered. When a problem is a puzzle, push your best right up against it, and then ask God to help you through. Why not? This is a part of life, the best part. It was made especially for school and good boys who get a hard lesson. Jesus knew this and it was a large part of his secret. He studied hard and God always helped him. He didn't hate school and stay away from it, but he learned to like it, because it was making him ready for life and to be what God wanted him to be.

III

On the Playground



JUST below and right in front of Nazareth there is a large level space. This is almost surrounded by hills, and makes a perfect playground. They could not find a better place to have a ball game than this. It seems to have been made for this, and in their sports all the boys knew this level, grass-covered field better than any other in the world, and Jesus must have been there very often too, and not only was he there but he entered the games with more life and joy than most others. They liked to be with him and he with them, and no one had a happier time than he. Just what games they played we do not know, but they were something like ours, and some of them just the same. Whatever the game was, Jesus would enter into it and like to play it and played his best.

They are having a ball game, perhaps, in which all the boys are interested, and each side is doing its best to win. There are many watching the play and are

almost as anxious as the players themselves. Neither side seems to be able to get far in the lead, and it is near the end, when suddenly there is a great shout and everybody is excited. They hear the cheering and laughter all over the village. Some one struck the ball and it flew like a bird just over the heads of the second base and center field and away over the line. There was a home run and time to spare and a triumph for his side. If Jesus was there, he was the most interested and most enthusiastic of them all. He threw himself into this part of life the same as in other things. He gave it his whole attention and gave it his best. This was one of the reasons why all other boys liked to be on his side. It is a great thing for a boy to be a good player. As many mistakes are made here as in other parts of life. To play well and get the most out of it for yourself and for others is a great art. Jesus knew the secret. He could do more than one thing, and whenever they wanted him he did his best. He could throw the ball or strike the ball or catch the ball. He could throw a swift one and catch it when it was thrown to him. There was no half-way with Jesus. Every muscle and nerve and faculty had to be called into service just as much when he played as when he worked. He must have followed the motto "Work when you work and play when you play." He gave the whole self to that one thing. He did not want to be on the playground all the time, but when he entered

The Boy Jesus

into any game he made a business of it. This is the best way, the only way. Play when you play. Work when you work. Sleep when you sleep. Whatever you do, do that thing then and do it all over.

But Jesus did not play for himself. The deepest enjoyment bubbled up in the fountain of unselfishness. He was always thinking of the other boy, not how he could have his own way and the best place and play his own kind of game, but the first thought was the desire of others. He had learned that to increase the joy of another is the best, and in reality the only way to increase your own. Have you ever heard boys say, with the voice of a cat or dog, or the growl of a bear, "I don't want to play that. I will not do this. If I cannot play what I want to I won't play at all. If I have to be 'it' I will go home. I will not be in it at all if I cannot have my way." He is the disagreeable boy who plays soldier, but must always be captain; who plays horse, but must always be driver; who plays ball, but must be at the bat; who plays always the game of self and likes no other. How the play of the world is ruined by such boys! How all the music is made discord, and everybody a little less happy by such a spirit! Jesus never talked or acted like that. He may have wanted to play another game, but he would not stand out against all the others and be mean. He could not be mean. He knew how to give in and be the first to consider the others. A selfish boy is a

JESUS AND JOHN



poor playmate. Very soon everybody knows him and no one likes him. Selfishness is poison, and poison kills every sport. If they played tag, it was just like Jesus to offer to be "it" first. The other kind of a boy would try every possible way, even by falsehood, to get the best for himself, and make some one else have the hard place, and if he could keep that one in it, strive his best to do so. Very likely this one would be the small boy, or the slow boy, or the lame boy. Jesus would give them the best chance and help them win if he could. You would have seen him slacken his speed or stumble purposely to be caught by some one who was almost out of breathing material. He was so quick, and was apt to see just how the other boy was feeling, and at the critical time help him out. There are some boys who only play when they can win. They like most any game when they come out ahead, but as soon as it goes against them they are ready to give it up, even to break up the game before it is played out if they are behind. The game has lost all its charm for them when another is winning. Any boy who plays like that does not hold out a very good sign in front of himself. Others know instantly what kind of a boy he is. Jesus was just as happy when some one else won the game. It was a different drop of joy, but it tasted just as sweet in his cup. One thing was always said about him by all the boys of Nazareth, "He played fair." He hated cheating. The boy who

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by some trick or half-lie would get the best of the other boy was not his kind. He was happier away from them. The one who cheats always thrusts something into the game to mar it. Every one distrusts him and the whole-hearted confidence is driven away. Some boys would not steal or lie, but will deceive and misrepresent and play unfair. Jesus could always be trusted. He was large-hearted, and open-hearted, and pure-hearted, and whole-hearted.

The boy who is always playing hide and seek with himself is a poor playmate. He plays the same with others and they do not know where to find him. You want to know a boy when you see him, and not be compelled to watch a long time and then have him a stranger yet and wonder about him, not knowing what he will do. To look at Jesus was to know him; straightforward, sincere, and true, the hater of every underhanded scheme and trick and deception. He did not try to be other than he was. Many a bright boy, and attractive, spoils himself and the joy of others by trying to be something he is not. What do you think of such a boy? You have seen him; take a good look at him and say honestly what you think of him. He looks so small you almost pity him. How unmanly and ignoble and foolish the boy who is always playing smart, trying to make others laugh at his own expense! And it is very expensive. It costs him all his manly qualities. It is the waste of everything noble

and attractive in him. Almost any other kind of a boy than this one, the homely boy, the slow boy, the ignorant boy, the dull boy, rather than this repulsive one! Jesus was above all this clownish action. He was just a true, sincere, noble, clear-eyed, clean-hearted, well-rounded boy, who knew how to play the best game in the world—making others happy.

U

Going to Church



WHEN Jesus was twelve years old a great event took place in his life. He went with his father that long journey of many miles and many days to Jerusalem. He had often thought of this, and wished that he might go. It was so much in his desire and thought that he must have even dreamed about it in the night. He had looked forward to it. He could hardly wait for the day to come when they would start for the city about which he had heard so much, and which was to him the most sacred and wonderful of all places on earth. Now there was to be a great religious feast. Many were going, whole companies and caravans of travelers. They all had to walk or ride on donkey back or on camels as far as they could in the daytime, and then pitch their tents for rest at night.

Every year his father and mother had gone on the same journey but he always stayed at home, and waited anxiously for the day to come when he would be able

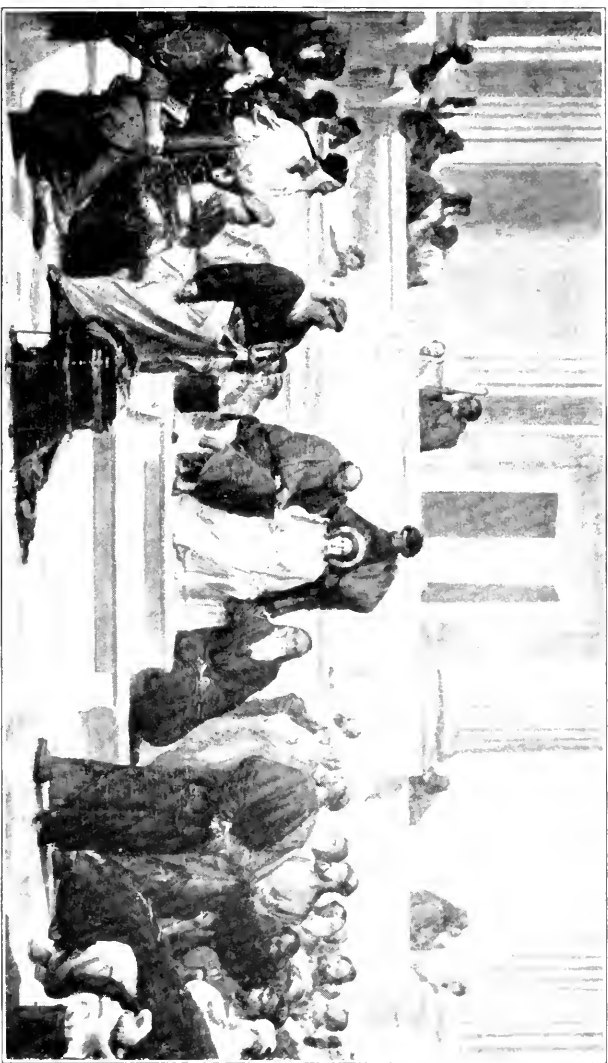
to go with them. Now it had arrived! How he must have pictured the great city and the beautiful temple and wondered about it all! For twelve years he had heard the history of it, and the wonders connected with its life and worship. That morning they left their home in Nazareth must have been the brightest he had yet seen, and the first sight of the great city and the first day in it were beyond his expectation full of excitement and wonder.

He went with them for the same purpose as all the other people, just to worship in the great temple and keep the religious feast which they called the Passover. To a boy's wondering eyes this all must have been a kind of new world. When a boy has a time like this come in his life how does he feel? That must have been the way Jesus felt. He had heard so much about the temple and its worship, and now he was walking in the courts of the building, looking at the priests and the altar with its bleeding sacrifice and rising incense, and saw the holy place and the great veil, and wondered about it and what was behind it. The thought must have stirred his heart. Something in him seemed to say that was the best place in which he had ever been, and something made him feel as if he wanted to stay right there. They were in and around the temple and in and around the city for seven days. He saw the streets and their stores. He saw the palaces and towers, and huge walls and large gates. He visited

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their friends and all places of interest, but the one place most attractive to him was the temple.

Now they were ready to return home and something strange happened. The roads were crowded, and thousands were going in every direction, especially on the way toward Galilee. His father and mother were in a long procession, all returning together. The custom was for the boys to be kept together for travel and in the same tents at night. The first night out, when his mother went to look for Jesus and see if he was all right she could not find him. During the day they supposed he was coming behind with the others, and now he was missing! No one seemed to know about him. They searched everywhere and asked everybody, but he could not be found. Both his father and mother were very anxious and frightened. They feared some harm had come to him. Possibly some enemy had taken him and hidden him in Jerusalem and would carry him away. Possibly some accident had befallen him. They supposed of course that he had started with the others and was following in the rear of the procession. They immediately turned back and hastened to the city to search there for him. How sad their hearts were, and how full of dark thoughts! They had supposed there was no risk in taking him with them and now some evil had befallen him. Maybe some one had recognized him and remembered his escape from Herod when he was a baby, and now had carried out



JESUS AMONG THE DOCTORS

From the original photograph, by courtesy of the
W. A. Wilde Company

the order of the governor; but twelve years had passed; he was so changed, and they were changed too. No one could have known anything about this. It must be something else. The stars that night seemed to lose their light, it was so dark for them. They quickly went from one place to another. They did this for one or two whole days and asked every one about him.

At last they found him. He was in one of the side rooms of the temple, a room where the wise men and religious teachers were accustomed to be and to teach. He was in the center of this company of old teachers, and was asking them questions. They seemed to be astonished at the knowledge Jesus had, and were silenced before some of his statements. This room was a kind of school, and the custom was to ask questions; but this boy and his questions were new to them and caused them to wonder. They could not understand where this plain-looking, and yet bright-faced Galilean boy had learned such wisdom. He was so interested, and they were so interested in him, that the time had passed so quickly he had not realized the meaning of his absence from his father and mother. Now when they saw him they were so amazed and so delighted that they could hardly speak. At last his mother asked him why he had stayed there and given them this anxiety and long search. She could not understand it then. I wonder if Jesus just understood all of its meaning. At least he knew this, that he had something special to

do in the world, and this stay with the teachers in the temple was necessary to that life-work. What a wonderful moment it is in the life of any boy when he realizes that he has a work to do in the world and decides to do it, and from that hour pushes his whole life toward that end! When a boy wants to do what God wants him to do, and finds out what that is, he is on the way to the highest life and the only success.

When Jesus was home in Nazareth he always went to church and always liked to go. It was a large part of his life. The Bible says it was his habit to go to the house of God always on the Sabbath Day. When he waked up in the morning his first thought was the worship of God. This was the training of all boys then. Just as soon as he waked he thought of God and prayed. When he arose from the bed he was not allowed to move four steps before washing his hands and face as a sign that he had a clean heart and a pure life. It was wicked to touch the face or any part of the body until this was done. After he was dressed he lifted the basin with his right hand and passed it to his left hand, pouring the clear, clean, cold water three times over the right hand, and then the same was done for his left hand. Afterward he washed his face three times. Then his hands were raised and a prayer was made.

This Jesus did every morning of his life. Then he usually went into the church for a daily morning

service. There were also many special religious services and days. So Jesus came often to the house of God to worship. It was a large part of his life. It ought to be of every boy's life; no habit is so good as this. Never to have it or to lose it is the saddest thing in life.

Sometimes in the synagogue in Nazareth Jesus saw all the people come in clothed in a garment of coarsest cloth and throw ashes on their head, while the minister was calling on everybody to repent and be truly sorry for their sins. Then all the people would say mournfully some psalm, and the trumpets would wail out a crying sound. After this they all went to the cemetery, and there again cried over their sins. This and all other kinds of religious services had much to do with his life. There were three regular services each day and the best people went to them all. Our boys sometimes think one service in a whole week is too much.

To what kind of a church did Jesus go? There was only one in Nazareth. It was a stone building about twice as long as it was wide, built of heavy stones and stone floors, with three doors in one end and five rows of seats within. The women were separated from the men in the service, and they were not seen by each other. This and some other things seem very strange to us, but to them and to Jesus it had everything to do with their life. No place was so much to him as this church. He did not think of it as something he could just as well leave out of his life, as though it did not

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make much difference anyway. Rather, he said, "This is the necessary part of my living." Sometimes boys become very careless about the church. They even do not go to the Sunday-school and do not have anything to do with good things, not thinking that they lose God's blessing and cannot be happy. Jesus did not need it any more than you do, but he formed the habit of always going to church. The boy who does that will grow up to be the best when a man. The church is the vital part of the boy's life, and to worship God the greatest thing a boy can do.

VI

Learning His Trade



HERE is in Nazareth a small carpenter shop in which they say Joseph the father of Jesus worked, and in which the boy Jesus helped his father and learned to be a carpenter himself. This may not be the place where he worked, but there was some place very like it in which a large part of his boyhood was passed, a small room with great stone walls, a very narrow opening for a window, so that most of the time it was more dark than light, a stone floor or else the bare ground, a wooden work-bench, and the tools—very different from those the carpenters now have—few in number and very imperfect to accomplish the purpose for which they were intended. At one side stood a bench and just above it two or three shelves against the wall. On these were some patterns and the tools. There must have been a hammer and something like a saw, also a number of edge-tools and instruments to make the holes and smooth the sticks and boards.

Whatever there was in this shop it was much harder to make beautiful and strong things than it is now. Jesus had seen his father work so hard and think so much over the things he had to make that he was always trying to help him and do what he could to make the work easier. He was thinking and planning too, and doing his best to make everything come out right. Whenever he saw his father stop and plan and wipe his brow and seem so burdened and puzzled, Jesus would say, "Will not this way make it better?" "Cannot I hold it for you?" "Shall not I run and get that?" "Tell me anything to do and I will do it." Then his father would straighten up and the burden would seem to roll right off his shoulders. His face changed and he began to see it better, the wrinkles became smiles and he said, "I see it now. We can do it all right." "We"—he counted his boy in with him in the work. They were partners and always tried to help each other. He stood many times in the shavings and held one end of the large stick which his father was trying to form in the right shape for a yoke. He watched every move until very soon he knew just how to make one himself. He was always asking about it and trying to learn, so that he could some day make the same things, and make them better than anybody else.

That carpenter shop was a familiar place to Jesus. When they did not know where he was they always

went first to the shop to find him. Many hours of his time were spent there helping his father and learning his trade. This had very much to do with his whole life. It may have been more to him than anything else except his home. Other boys liked tools and liked to make things themselves. Jesus was just the same, about that. What work he had to do there he made pleasure out of it and became very skilled in his art.

One day he may have been down below the village watching an Arab build his tent. He stayed longer than he should have and came home late because he was so interested in the making of this tent. They spread out their camel's haircloth or skins and then fixed the center-pole, throwing over it the covering and driving down the pegs at the right distance and fastening the strings to them to make it smooth and firm. When this was all ready he began to wish he had a tent of his own. On the way home he decided to make one, and to plan it all out and stay awake to do it. They found him very early in the shop in the morning, asking his father if he could have that piece of wood and this board, and then he worked them smooth and got them the right length and sharpened the pegs. Afterward he found some old cloth and fastening all the pieces together the tent was ready to be built in their yard or near the shop. Every boy knows something about this part of life and its joy. Jesus must have known too. When he went inside that tent he

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was delighted with his success as any other boy would have been.

It must have been a bright spot in his boy days when his father took him over the hills to the lake of Galilee, where he saw that beautiful water and its busy cities. He was attracted by the boats especially, so many of them, sailboats and rowboats, but none of which go like our steam or electric boats—boats for the many fishermen, and boats for other people to cross the lake and to sail for pleasure. He must have said to himself, "Just as soon as I get back home I am going right to the shop to make a boat." He could hardly wait to see what kind of a small boat he could make. When they returned he found the wood and asked for the tools and planned the little boat just like those he had seen. He made the main part first and hollowed it out. He fixed a small cabin and whittled out a smooth mast. He rigged a sail on the mast and cut the oars to be ready for the time when the wind did not blow. He had taken notice of everything they had on the Galilee boats, and his boat must be an exact copy, a perfect little craft. He was pleased when it was finished. Everybody had to see it and everybody praised it. Was there ever a boy who did not like to make a boat? If you have not, you must begin right away; your boy life and pleasure will not be complete if you do not do this.

Whenever his mother called him to do something

for her he never said, "Wait a minute," or "Ask somebody else," or "I don't want to do it," or many other replies which some boys make to their mothers. He often saw what wanted to be done before she asked him, and he did it of his own accord. How happy that made her! It made her burdens lighter for the whole day. It does not take much in this world to change everything. Just a thought or a word or a deed prompted by love is a magic power.

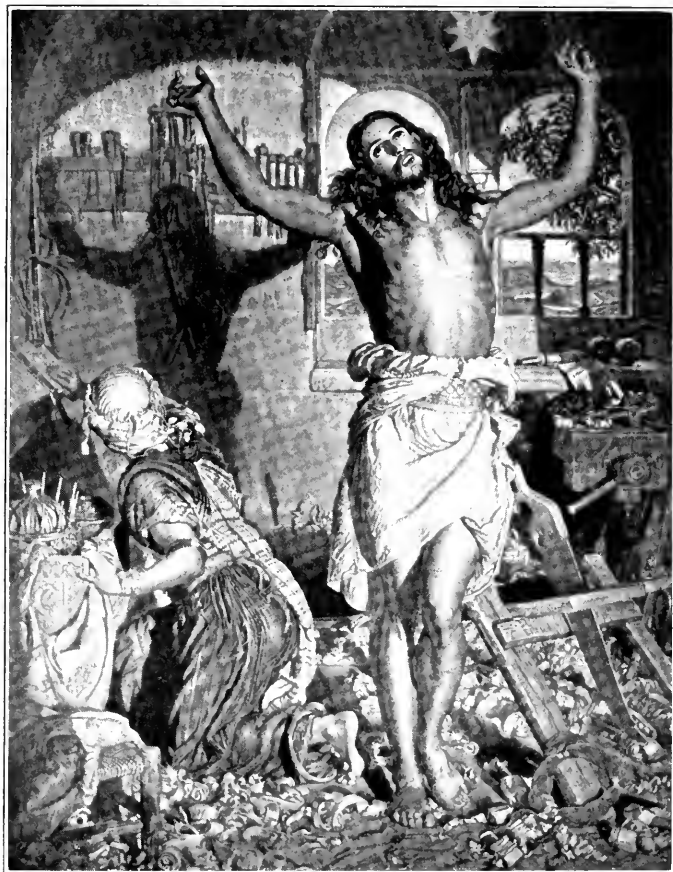
It was a long way to the spring where they went for the water. All the water they drank or used had to be carried from this one spring. It was the only one in all that part of the country. Many times, and probably many times a day, some one had to go for water. His mother had to do most of this heavy burden-bearing. When he was too small to carry the load he went with her, but just as soon as he could do it for her, it was his joy to go. This fountain of water was like the fountain of joy in his heart. It is a manly boy who helps his mother and helps his father and is not afraid of work in his boyhood days.

Jesus was helping his father earn a living for their family and learning the trade for himself. Everything he made for himself, or helped his father in the making, was preparing him to bear the greater burden of work when it came. It came very soon. When he was thirteen or fourteen years of age death entered their home bringing a great sorrow. His father was taken away.

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His mother was almost crushed beneath the blow. Now was his chance. Here was a heavy responsibility. Duty called loudly to him. Of course he heard the call and answered with true courage and love. He must take his father's place; he must now be the carpenter himself and make the yokes and plows and doors and tables and chairs and benches and houses, and almost everything that was made then. It was such a blessing that he had learned a trade, such a grand thing that the boy could now take care of himself and help take care of others. Every morning until night you could have heard the hammer pounding and the saw making its noise, and the axe cutting and the gimlet boring, while Jesus stood in the dust and the shavings, breathing hard and stopping a moment to rest, placing his tired hand on his side and his other one on his brow. If he had any work outside he carried a huge bag of tools and worked under a very hot sun. He sweltered in his lifting and drawing and planing and splitting and driving all the day long. He knew what blistered hands and bruised fingers were. He knew what it was to be almost too tired to sleep at night and not all rested in the morning.

While he was yet a boy he knew all this. He was a boy working at making wagons and houses and carrying heavy burdens. His name was Jesus then, and he was just living your life and getting ready to be your Saviour. This was one of the most beautiful parts of



JESUS IN HIS WORKSHOP

From the original photograph, by courtesy of the
W. A. Wible Company

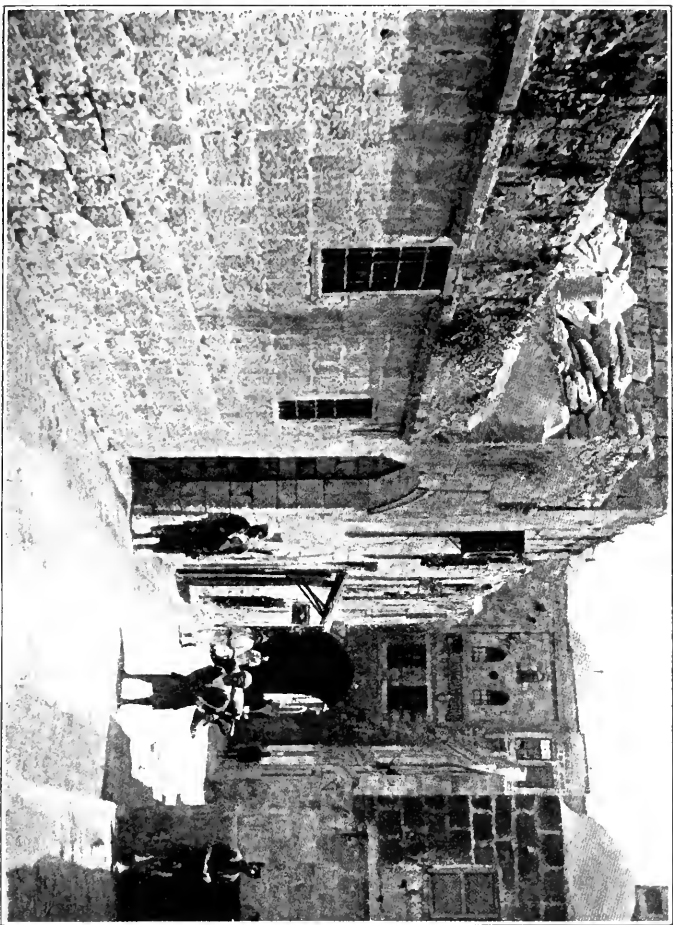
his life. He was not afraid of work. He was ready to face this or any other necessity. It was just noble for him to take care of his mother. Any boy who does this is one of the most heroic boys in the world. Many of them are doing it, and the angels stop to watch them and watch over them. What more manly act in this world than this! Here are to be found some of the greatest boys in the world, boys who give up everything and work hard to support their mothers, and possibly their little brothers and sisters. They are royal boys, and God will bless them for it. The boy who is afraid of work is bound to be a failure. This is necessary to any success and every one had better learn how to do it right away. To be lazy is to be wicked and to be worthless. A snail is slow but it is not lazy. The alligator sleeps a great deal, but it is not lazy. A boy ought to be better than an animal. The ideal boy should look at the busy ant and learn a great lesson. Better than that, he ought to look at the boy Jesus and see him at work and see him happy in the doing of it, and see him always doing his best.

VIII

In His Home



BY the side of one of the narrow streets of Nazareth stood the home in which Jesus grew up and which he loved so much. That must have been a blessed place for him and a shelter in which he always liked to be. It was very different from our homes to-day—a low, flat-roofed, small building made out of white stone. The walls were very thick. Some vines were creeping over them, and doves sunning themselves on the flat roof. A low doorway opened through one of the walls, and a very small window or two. When Jesus entered this doorway what did he see? A large room with very simple things in it; a few mats on the floor; a large seat along the wall with some cushions upon it and the bright quilts that were used for covering when it was used for the bed at night. In the daytime this bench also served to hold some dishes used by the family. Another chest or bench stood in the corner. There were several large clay water-jars also upon the floor.



JEWISH HOMES LIKE JESUS' HOME

some of them filled with water and some held green herbs to keep the water fresh and cool.

When it was time for them to have their food, what a strange sight! Here comes the mother of Jesus, or some one else, carrying a low, round, painted stool and standing it right in the center of the room. Then she brings a tray holding the dish in which the food is and places it upon the stool. The whole family sit right down upon the floor, or on mats, with their legs crossed. They form a circle around this table and eat their food very slowly and with great pleasure.

These things seem strange to us, but the principal part of Jesus' home life was just the same as ours. Homes are not made out of stone and wood. His father and mother were there, and his friends, with loving-kindness and sympathy and all that makes life and joy. No boy who lives in a small home need envy a boy who lives in a palace. Love makes the home. Jesus knew what that was. He loved his father and mother and they loved him.

When he first began to learn he was taught to honor his parents. He made that one of the great lessons of his life. The boys then were compelled to learn that over and over again in the school and in the church and in the home. They were constantly hearing of God's blessing on the boy who was good to his father and mother. They were told that this was so important that God made a promise and fastened it to

his commandments, that the boy who did this should live long and prosper.

Jesus made the rule of his boyhood days always to respect and love and obey his parents. He planted a seed in the garden, and in a few weeks came the beautiful and fragrant blossom. He said this is just the way with life; the seeds of obedience make the garden and the harvest field. If his father told him to do something, he always did that one thing and did it well, and did it right away. If his mother told him to go to the fountain or the market, he didn't go somewhere else or linger along the way. He knew that obedience meant to do that one thing and to do it at once. To be asked to do something and not to do that but something else is not obedience. To hesitate and delay is not to obey. Jesus knew this so well and it was one of the most beautiful parts of his life as a boy. He never said he would do it and then forget it, or always answered "In a minute," "Wait and I will," but he was ready to drop everything and do the will of his parents. The boy who is obedient is the best boy; that is one of the greatest parts of all life. To respect older people and honor them and serve them is one of the noblest things in the world. The boy who does this is always sure to make a good man. In this way Jesus added much to the joy of his home. This helped to make it such a good home. Every boy has so much to do with the making of his own home. He

can almost always have it just what he wants it to be. At least, he can always make his part of it right, and be obedient and respectful and loving and kind.

If you had been in the boyhood home of Jesus you would have seen something like this: a bright-faced boy with his great round eyes looking up into his mother's face as he sat by her side listening to the story she was telling him. He was so interested that he never took his eyes from her, and he almost stopped breathing sometimes. He always desired to hear those stories which were so familiar to her and so dear to her people. She said, "Which one do you wish to hear now?" And he said, "Oh, tell me about the boy David." Then she began to relate to him the story of that boy life, watching his father's sheep in the fields, and his beautiful voice for singing, and his skilful hand for playing on the harp and other musical instruments; how he went away with his flocks for weeks in the mountains and led them in the best place for pasture in the daytime, while in the night hours he lay by them on the hillside and in the valleys to protect them from the wild beasts or other injury. Many times he had to use his club and his knife against the fierce animals which came to kill his sheep.

But while she was telling all this part of David's life, Jesus was waiting for the one part most exciting and most interesting to him—that wonderful day on the battlefield when the two armies were drawn up

against each other, and the great giant of the enemy had challenged so boldly and contemptuously the other side. Just then the boy David came into the camp of Israel with some things his mother had sent to his brothers who were soldiers in the army. He heard the great giant defy God and his people and his courageous soul could not stand this. He said, "I will fight him in the strength of my God." They all laughed at him while the giant mocked him and cursed him. The soldiers wanted to cover him with heavy armor before he went to meet the warrior, but he refused it or any other help. Breathing his prayer to God, he went down to the side of the brook and there picked out five smooth stones. With them in his leather bag and his sling in his hand, to the amazement of them all he went right on and faced the bold giant who laughed at him and was just waiting to kill him in an instant; but the brave boy never paused until he came very near his enemy. Then he placed one of the little pebbles in his leather sling, and taking perfect aim swung it around in a circle as swift as the wind and let it go. It went like an arrow straight to the mark. It struck the giant right in the forehead. He dropped dead on the hillside. David ran up and seized his mammoth sword and finished the work by severing his head from his body. The frightened army all fled in confusion and haste while they were pursued by the army of God and were at last defeated and destroyed. The boy David was the

hero. Jesus sat almost breathless to hear the end of this story. His mother knew just how to tell it, and to tell him that the boy who trusts in God is always victorious.

Jesus and his mother must have gone many times from their home up to the top of the hill above the village. Here was a grand view of all the country for many miles, the mountains and the valleys and the sea and the stream. She had had to tell him about all these places because so many things had taken place in relation to them. Most beautiful hours Jesus passed up there, and heard very many interesting stories. They looked southwest for twenty miles and saw the famous Mount Carmel lifting its head above all the surrounding country, and looking as if it was a mighty king defying the sea which stretched far away in the distance. Then his mother told him all that strange scene which took place many years before on the top of Mount Carmel—how wicked people and false prophets were denying the true God and serving idols; how Elijah the great man of God offered them his challenge, and said, “This shall be the test: let us all go to Mount Carmel and build two altars. You pray to your gods and I will pray to my God. The God who answers by fire from heaven and burns up the sacrifice on the altar, he shall be God.” They all had to say yes. Then Elijah gave them the first chance, and they prayed and cried to Baal, and cut themselves with

knives and stones, and all day they kept this prayer going and it failed. No fire came. Then Elijah standing alone before God told them, to make it sure, to dig a trench, a deep one, all about the altar, to fill the trench with water, to pour water all over the altar and the sacrifice. They were astonished at his orders and his faith. When it was all made as hard as it possibly could be, Elijah fell on his knees and prayed to God to reveal himself and to destroy the false gods, to send fire from heaven before all the people. * Immediately a great fire came from the skies and burned the sacrifice and licked up every drop of water until the ground and stones were all parched and dry. This was a great triumph for God and the good.

How Jesus must have listened to this story of Carmel, and every time he saw it, or went up to the hills with his father or mother, he wanted to hear it over again. Jesus was just like other boys in this. He liked to hear stories and hear them over and over again. They must have been especially interesting to hear when he could see the very place where they occurred. On the hill or in the garden or in the home or wherever he was he found joy and made it for others. His home life was everything to him. That little house in Nazareth was the center of his world. He loved it and loved everybody in it, and they loved him. God's blessing was always upon that home. A good boy and a good home are great things.

VIIII

Facing Temptation



IN the country where Jesus lived there were many lonely places which they called deserts, because they were so rocky and without any grass or flowers or scarcely any trees, just great hills and mountains, barren all the way to the top. On the sides of these were caves and holes for wild animals. No one lived in these desert places and no one very near them. The wild beasts howled and the eagles screeched, and that was all that broke the awful silence. This was not a very pleasant place to go to, but Jesus went one day when he was a young man into the deepest part of the wilderness. He probably went in there to be alone by himself and to think about what he was to do in order to help others most and to save the world. He was not afraid. Was he ever afraid? How can anybody be in fear if he knows that God is always with him? Jesus knew this and always had the courage to go anywhere or do anything. It is wonderful to live that way, but that is

The Boy Jesus

the way any boy can live, knowing that God will stand by him when he is doing right, and will give him strength to do it. Jesus said that he was never alone, even in this dark and dismal place. He could not go alone. His Father was always with him.

But there is another person in our world and in the deserts too. Satan is everywhere, doing his best to make us forget God and not do the right. He came to Jesus just as soon as he was in this desert place and began to talk to him as if he was his friend, telling him what he ought to do. Jesus had been here by himself for a long time and without any food, and of course was very hungry. Satan said, "This is my chance. He is almost starved. He will do anything now to get something to eat." So he went to him and tried to make him forget that God was going to care for him and would not let him starve or really want. Satan said, "Now is your opportunity to show your power and provide for yourself. If you are the Son of God stand right in front of these stones and command them to become loaves of bread so that you can satisfy your hunger." Then Jesus instantly thought of his trust in his Father, and that he ought to do only what God said, not what the tempter told him to do. So he replied, "It is written in the word of God that no one ought to live by bread only, but by the promises and truth of God."

This temptation was an utter failure for Satan and



JESUS FACING TEMPTATION

he must have felt it, but he is never willing to give up. He is always determined to win. So he led Jesus out and into the city and climbed to a high part of the temple and said to him, "Now is the time and this is the place to show what you can do. Make the world believe that you are the Son of God. Just stand up here at this great height where the people can see you and suddenly astonish them by leaping off and coming down in their midst without any harm to yourself. Tell them that the angels held you." Immediately Jesus saw through the scheme of Satan again, and boldly answered, "I will not do it because it is not right to do contrary to the wish of God and try him in some wrong way.

But Satan would not give up yet. He led him up to the summit of a very high mountain, and told him to look around in every direction. He said, "Look to the north and the south and the east and the west. Behold all the nations and kingdoms of the world." Jesus looked and all this was a very attractive sight. While he was seeing it the tempter said, "If you will give up God and fall down right here and worship me, I will give you all these kingdoms and you shall be ruler of them all. You have the power and they will recognize it. There is something more to your life than to an ordinary man's life, and the world will be yours in this way." Again Jesus looked and said as he stamped his foot and pointed his hand at Satan, "Get thee

behind me forever. I will not listen to you. I will only give myself to my Father in heaven."

Then he was all alone again, and something very strange took place. Angels came quickly from heaven and fed him and cared for him and stayed by him. Was that so strange? No! It was to be expected! It was God's way! Then it is God's way now. Be heroic and true and good and the angels will not be far away from you. Somehow they will care for you.

Where did Jesus learn how to treat Satan? How did he get ready for such a hard trial when he came to be a young man? He was doing the same way when he was a boy. Every day and wherever he was he met temptation and resisted it. He was all ready for the great crisis in his life. Any boy who is going to run a race must practise. He must run a little farther and a little faster to-day than he did yesterday. Tomorrow he must do better than he did to-day, and when the great hour arrives, and he is to do his best, he wins. Every day facing temptation and being a victor makes a hero when the hardest time comes.

All boys have their temptations, and the boy Jesus must have had his, but he never gave in to them. He was always boldly facing them and coming away conqueror. The great victories are not on the battlefield or fighting Indians or wild animals. The hardest struggle anybody has ever met is when he is alone

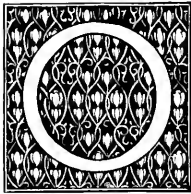
with Satan to tempt him. The greatest heroes may never have shot a gun or held a sword in their hand. Some of the battlefield fighters have fallen right down in front of some temptation. The man in India who goes into the jungle and hunts elephants might be a coward in a plain field facing just an ordinary temptation. A man in India shot an elephant and only wounded him. He shot him again and that only gave him more rage. He tore up the earth and then came after the man, but that man alone with a small tree between him and his enemy, with a gun and a knife kept the elephant off until help came, and finally killed him. That same man said many times he had been cowardly and given right up to some small temptation. The bravest boy in the world is the one who fights his temptations and fights to win. He is ready to stand the more difficult battle when he is a man.

When Jesus was a boy he had wonderful control of himself. He would not allow himself to become angry and say ugly things and do injury to others and to himself. He never had to excuse himself because he had lost his temper or hurt some one or destroyed the happiness of his home or broken up the game. How quickly most boys get angry and fly into a rage! They think it manly to fight and defend themselves. This is not self-defense. It is self-destruction. They are just doing what Satan wants them to do, and that means their ruin. Jesus stood against all these, and

never allowed any ill temper to mar his heart or his face. He learned the greatest lesson of life—self-control. This was his way, not only with temper, but in everything. He controlled his appetite. He never ate so much that he suffered afterward because of it. His health was everything, and he knew that failure to control his eating would ruin his body. When the boy comes to be a man he must bear the penalty of over-eating or any other sin. If he resists temptation health and happiness follow him into manhood. It is sin just the same to yield to temptation and destroy the health of the body as it is to kill yourself or to kill another. Many failures in life can be traced back to the boyhood days of giving in to temptation in some form. The seeds are planted in the spring and we gather the harvest in the summer and autumn. These other seeds are planted in the spring too, in boy life, and the harvest will surely come later. It is a great thing for a boy to look forward to a garden instead of a desert. The boy Jesus met the temptations which other boys meet, but he stood up against them like a hero and refused even to listen to them. He walked away and entered the path of right and went straight on.

IIÆ

Living the Truth



ONE day when they were making that long journey from Nazareth to Jerusalem they passed by a strange-looking tomb—a grave out in the field and fenced off by itself. His father must have pointed it out to Jesus and told him a strange story about it. He had heard it often before, but each time they repeated it to him it was more interesting. It was one of his favorite stories and he could not hear it too often. It was about a boy whose life was so noble and so wonderful. Undoubtedly they stopped at this sepulcher and rested while Jesus looked at it—every part of it, and was so anxious to hear its history when they told him it was the grave of Joseph after whom his own father was named. This was the very ground over which the boy Joseph walked and played. These were the very hillsides down which he ran, and here by the road he picked the flowers and played his games. They pointed across the field just a short distance and showed where

the famous well was which Joseph's father dug so deep and made so solid that here through all the hundreds of years the inhabitants and travelers had quenched their thirst. Jesus must have been enthusiastic right away and said, "Tell me again the story of the boy Joseph while we sit here in the shadow of his tomb and rest." How intently he must have listened, and imagined he could almost see the boy in the field, that boy whose life he had always admired so much! The boy who was the youngest in a family of brothers and whom his father had loved so dearly—he was so sincere and true! He was always trying to please his father, and his father was always trying to do something for him. He gave him a beautiful coat made out of many colors, and made out of his father's sacrifice and love. One day they sent him a long distance from the home to that part of the fields to see his older brothers who were there watching the flocks of sheep and cattle. He carried them some good things to eat and a message from their home. When they saw him they became jealous of him and said their father thought too much of him and gave him more than he did any other one of them. So, instead of appreciating the kindness, and the food which he brought, they began wickedly to make a plan to get rid of him, and finally decided to drop him down in a deep well—an old empty well—and cover it over with a large flat stone, leaving him to die. What a shudder



JESUS BY THE OLD WELL.

this must have shot through the tender heart of a boy like Jesus! It did not seem possible to him. His look had a question mark in it, but his father assured him that this was their murderous thought and desire. Suddenly they espied in the distance a caravan of travelers and traders coming. One of them said, "This will be better for him than the pit. Save his life, but get rid of him just the same by selling him to these strangers, and they will take him as their slave-boy away down to Egypt, and we will never hear of him again or be troubled with him." They all agreed to this plan and he was sold and carried away. But what could they say to little Joseph's father? How could they explain his not coming back? "Oh," one of them suggested, "that is easy to do. Kill a lamb and cover this coat with the blood, and tell father that a bear or a lion must have eaten him up on the way back. This was a falsehood and the breaking of a father's heart.

Now it was time to start on their journey again, and Jesus, just like other boys, said "No, don't go yet. Finish the story. Tell me the other part of it." And his father said, "Come on. We will tell you as we go." Then he related that which was so thrilling: how Joseph rose from a slave-boy in Egypt and out of the life in a prison, to be the ruler of all that country; how everybody loved him and almost worshiped him because he was so true. His wisdom and his character

lifted him to the throne. Then came the great famine, and out of his storehouses the corn was given to his own brothers who came so far to get it and keep themselves and others from starving. They did not know Joseph, but he knew them. He was kind to them and at last told them who he was. Then he sent for his old father and brought him into the palace to live with him.

Jesus loved that kind of life, and above everything else he thought a boy ought to be true—not only to speak the truth, but to live it—to be the truth. This was one of the startling things he said about himself when he came into manhood. "I am the truth." His idea of the right kind of a boy was one who loved the truth—one who could always be depended upon, who was sincere down to the lowest corner of his heart. Jesus could not understand how those brothers of Joseph could be so cruel or so false. He hated a lie or anything that was deceptive. He would rather die than utter the shadow of untruth. To be true is the ideal for every boy's life—not to appear and to seem and to be a sham, but to live the truth, to be a genuine boy. Sometimes a boy may have fashionable clothes, he may be polite, and yet be a sham. Dress does not make a boy. Politeness is good, but purity is better. The boy who does not tell the truth and live the truth is walking on the quicksand, and every minute he breathes he is sinking deeper into ruin. The only solid foundation

in the world is the truth. Even if you are sold as a slave-boy and go to prison and suffer persecution, remember every Joseph comes to a throne. Every boy's success and every boy's character must rest upon the truth.

Whenever they saw the boy Jesus they said, "There goes the truth." When he saw a boy trying to make a trade with one of his companions and cheating him in the bargain, that was enough to show him what kind of a boy he was and to warn him to keep him and his spirit out of his life. A cheating boy is a dangerous associate. He could find no friend in Jesus.

When he went by a shop in Nazareth and listened to the storekeepers saying that which was false about their goods and charging a price far more than the real value, his heart always carried a protest against it, and he felt that such a way of doing business was far from God's plan, and must receive his condemnation. He knew that the laws of his world would work, and no boy or man could make anything by robbing another. He must always be the loser in the end, for the only success is in the pathway of truth.

Jesus saw many times a familiar sight in the street—a funeral procession. He could hear the sad mourning cry a long way off. Presently appeared the slowly moving procession. At the head was the richly ornamented box holding the dead body of one of the Nazareth merchants. It was carried on the shoulders of

The Boy Jesus

four men, and followed by a crowd of mourners making very strange noises and going through strange motions. As they passed Jesus, he must have said, "What is the use of such a life? He has just lived for himself. He has been trying to take the advantage of everybody. He has carried falsehood on his lips and falsehood in his heart. The only thing he did was to make riches and keep them. Now they are of no value to him. What good did he ever receive from them? They have cursed his life and ruined his soul. The only life is the true life. This is the only riches and success. This must be my life." Jesus tried to learn a lesson from everything. When he was a boy he kept his eyes and his mind and his heart open. He saw everything and was interested in it, and pushed his whole soul against it. He tried to make it bring something of truth into his life and his world.

A crowd is gathering down at the foot of the hill in the open space. Everybody is coming that way. Jesus with some others hastens down to see the cause of the excitement. It is the wedding day of one of the young men in the town. He is in the center of a crowd, and they are singing and shouting and dancing about him. This is the beginning of the journey they are to make to the house of his bride. It will take them several hours to go a very short distance, because they go slowly and stop often. They work themselves into all manner of motions and complete exhaustion. They

shout and sway back and forth and sing and dance. They scatter flowers and branches and perfumes. They wave all sorts of garments, and at last place the bridegroom on a richly decorated horse. Then the crowd surrounds him and increases its wild manifestations of friendship and joy. Jesus watches all this and the coming of the virgins, and he follows the procession to the bride's house. He remembers it all, so that when he has grown to be a man he uses this very illustration to teach one of his most solemn truths; but the boy himself learned one of his greatest lessons as he watched these people and their actions and heard their words of insincerity. He saw that this was not friendship and truth. They were doing this almost entirely in pretense, and getting what they could out of it for themselves. He saw this was all on the surface—a show, and not real love and life. Most of these enthusiastic followers were only pretenders. Jesus stood and looked over it all and discovered its hollowness. He said a friend must first of all be true. Everything in the world and in human life depends upon that great reality. Everything is failure apart from it. He walked away saying to himself, "The best thing about a boy is the truth. At any cost I will be true."



Helping Others



ONE of the sights familiar to Jesus when he was a boy was the company of lepers, and the leper alone by himself in his sad condition and suffering from that dreadful disease which no doctor could cure. He saw them huddled together and crouching against the wall in the village. He saw them upon the roadside in the country, compelled to stay in their own companionship and separated from others. He saw them with their faces almost shapeless, ears gone, noses gone, chin gone. Their feet might be only stumps, and their hands fingerless and sore. They were almost too horrible to look at. He heard them give their pitiful, despairing cry for help and sympathy and food. His boyish heart went out with such a longing anxiety to bring some relief to them. Others passed on and paid no attention. Some wicked boys mocked them and tried to imitate their crying and their looks, but this hurt the heart of one boy more than it hurt the lepers.

Jesus gave them anything he could to help and sympathize with them. He was never afraid to come near them. He was their friend and many of them knew him, and their world was brighter because he lived in it. When he grew to be a man and to do his wonderful work as the Saviour of men, these poor afflicted people received many a tender touch from him. Many of them were healed of their leprosy by him. The brave heart of the boy just ached to help those who needed it so very much. One of the noblest parts of a boy's life is the tender touch and loving sympathy, that living, longing desire and determination to help everybody, and especially the lowly one who needs it most. The leper was cast out and despised by most other people, but the boy Jesus went out of his way to get near them and to do everything he possibly could for them. He was just the same in relation to any others who needed his love and his life.

He saw in that country very many who were blind—so different from our part of the world. We have very few whose eyes are dead to the world and who must always live in the dark. This is one of the most pitiable things which can come to human life. How we all dread it. We would have almost anything else rather than to be blind, never to see the flowers, the trees, the birds, or most of all, the faces of our loved ones; but this was an ordinary condition in the land where the boy Jesus lived, and is yet to-day—very little

The Boy Jesus

children without any eyes, boys and girls feeling their way about through a world of night, and grown people who are blind, at almost every turn. Jesus never saw one of these but his heart gave them its best sympathy, and at every opportunity his hand gave them its best assistance. He watched for his chance. If they were in danger he ran like the wind to reach them and rescue them. If they were about to be run against on the street he hastened to lead them to a place of safety. If any of the blind wanted to go to some place and could not find their way, Jesus would drop what he was doing or delay his errand or give up his play to take them by the hand and put them in the right path and help them on the way. Every step of the way he was saying to himself, "Oh, how I wish I could give him eyes, but I can anyway be eyes for him." When Jesus came to the hour of his miracles and his divine power, what a joy it must have been to do just what his boy's heart so often wished to be able to do! Some of the most wonderful moments in Jesus' life were the moments when he touched the eyes of the blind people and made them see. His heart was as happy as theirs, because it was his greatest joy to bring relief to others.

Possibly something like this occurred: One day he met an old man on the road between Nazareth and Cana, and the old man bending over and blind was feeling his way along the path of his sad life. Jesus stopped by him in answer to his appeal for help. Jesus



JESUS HELPING OTHERS

always stopped at the cry of a human heart. The old man did not expect to receive what Jesus gave him for, to his amazement, and the astonishment of the others who saw it, Jesus puts one hand in the trembling hand of the old man, and his other hand on the wrinkled face, and told him to look once more and see his world, and instantly his eyes received their vision, and he forgot to look at other things, but gazed into the face of Jesus and listened to his voice, and then he said, "You are the one. I know you. I remember it, the day you helped me when I was in trouble in the market-place in Nazareth years ago. You were a boy then, but it is the same voice and the same touch and the same heart." And it was. Jesus remembered that day too, and remembered that it was one of the most joyful days of his life, because he had helped somebody else, and some one who needed it very much. This is the way for any boy to make the world bright and beautiful for himself and for others. The way to get joy is to give joy. The way to be loved is to be loving. The way to help a blind man most is to give him back his eyes. The next best way is to be eyes for him. Any boy can do this, and this is the most wonderful thing in a boy's life, right next to working a miracle.

It does not take much effort to help somebody else, but it takes the best in a boy. The shepherds often had to bring their sheep—and sometimes great flocks

The Boy Jesus

of them—through the streets of Nazareth. It was not always an easy task. There were so many things to break them in sections and drive them in different directions, a caravan of camels or a procession or another drove of sheep. Then they were scattered, and the difficulty began. The shepherd was leading them, because he always went ahead of his sheep, and never drove them. Now he would call to this one and now to the other and then to his dog. He was in great trouble. Then some boys along the street increased the scattering of the sheep by throwing a stick or stone amongst them or making some noise to frighten them some more. Here was another good time to help some one, and the boy Jesus came to the rescue. He ran around this side and brought them together, then into the side street and drove back those running there. He kept them together until they were safe on the country road and near the pasture field.

He went often on the hillsides with the shepherds and was interested in hearing their stories and their songs and watching them in their love for the sheep. They knew each one of them by name. He may have been out with them during the night, as all night long the shepherd protected his flock from robbers and wild beasts, and let them sleep under the skies and heaven's covering. In the night Jesus listened to the strange music of the shepherds, as that weird whistle sounded over the hills and across the valleys, and made sleep

sweeter for the sheep and the night shorter for the shepherds. They liked the company of Jesus. He helped them and learned much from their life—great lessons which he never forgot and a great desire to be like them in his relation to others. So much did this mean to him that he even came to call himself when he was preaching the gospel “the good Shepherd.” That holy desire to protect and help and care for and save the people controlled his whole life. One of the shepherds may have told him, when he was a boy, about how he lost one of his lambs one night and how he searched and searched for it, and at last brought all the rest of his flock in the fold and then went out in the night and tried again to find it. All night he wandered in the wilderness and over the rocks and through the brush. He called and called and prayed, and it seemed to be only a failure. A hungry lion must have devoured his lamb. But he could not give it up; so he pushed his way straight into the darkness and the danger, when to his great joy he discovered the little lamb caught in a thicket, in a clump of thorns. It was bleeding and almost dead, but he soon rescued it and took it in his strong arms and carried it safely to shelter and to life. To save was the object of his whole life, and he began to show it when he was a boy. To help somebody was the boy’s motto, and afterward to save everybody was the Divine man’s life.

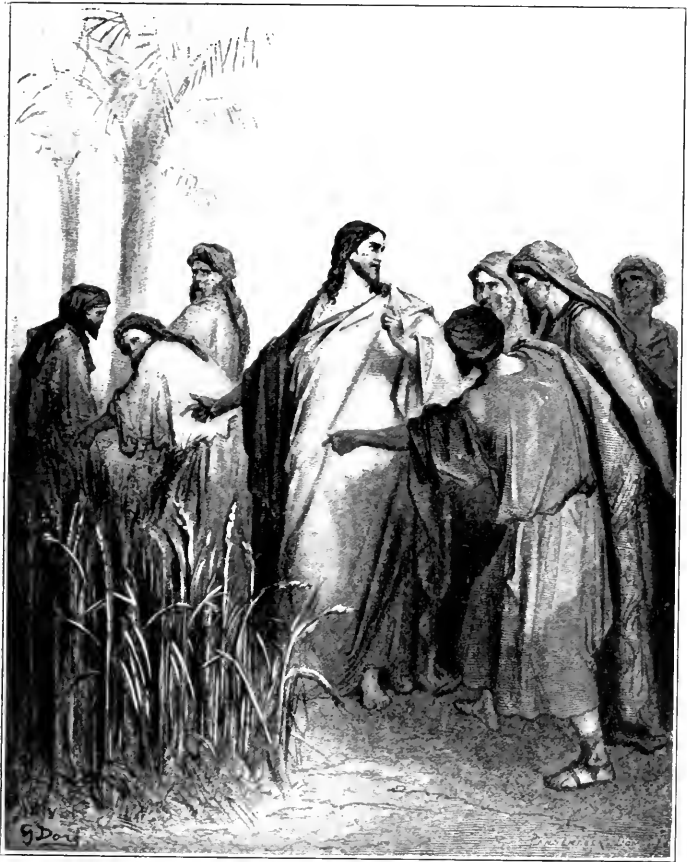
ÆII

Birds and Flowers



ANY happy hours Jesus passed in the fields looking at the flowers and watching the sheep and hearing the singing of the birds, and taking everything of beauty and health into his life. The place where the red lilies covered the ground was attractive to him, and he always had to stop and pick one, and then look down into its heart and share its joy and purity. He must have thought of them often in his boy life, for when he grew to be a man he said, "Just look at the lilies of the field, how they grow. They do not work. They do not get worried, but God clothes them in their beautiful dress, so that not even the richest king can wear such royal robes." He learned this all through his boyhood days, and he lived just as they did, trustful and obedient, and grew to be the perfect flower of manhood. He always kept his eyes open and saw everything and learned something from it.

He one day saw a hen and her chickens. He stood and watched her taking care of her little children.



JESUS IN THE FIELDS

The large family was a good deal of trouble to her. She tried to feed them and keep them near her, but they were always running away and getting into some mischief. While he stood watching her and laughing at her failure in keeping them where she wanted them, suddenly she turned her head one side, and then called as loudly as she could to every little one to come quickly and get under her wings. She seemed to be almost wild in her anxiety to get them all huddled beneath her feathers. Every second was a minute to her. They knew what it meant and pushed their way into this wonderful place of safety. What was the trouble and the cause of all this fright? There was a great ugly hawk hovering just above them in the sky. That mother hen had seen her enemy when he was just a black speck in the sky. She knew he was circling above her little ones and with every circle coming down nearer and nearer to them, and then like an arrow would shoot straight downward upon some of her chicken children and kill them. Jesus must have become almost as anxious as she was, and said when he discovered the danger, "I will not let him get them," because this was so fixed in his mind that when he came to teach the world his lessons he said, "How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings." His saving life meant something like that.

When he was a boy he must have loved to get away

The Boy Jesus

from the village and out on the hills and by the streams and in the woods and upon the rocks. Every boy likes that. The more wild it is, the more pleasure there is in it. He went on these trips with some of his friends. They caught sight of a fox. They began to chase him toward a corner, and in trying to catch him one went this way another that way. Each one ran his best and played his sharpest game on that fox, but the fox was a sly one and watched his chance too. He kept his eyes straight toward one place. At last they thought they had him and were just ready to shout, when he darted into an unseen hole in the side of the hill at the foot of an old tree. When he went in the last thing he seemed to do was to turn his nose around and laugh at them. He was home and safe. Jesus afterward in life remembered this so well that he said, "The foxes have holes, but the Saviour of men has no place to lay his head." The fox had a home, and in that respect was better off than Jesus was when he was a man and preaching his gospel.

Most boys do not see anything as they should do, but they only look at things and never learn from them or remember them. Two boys see the sunset. One of them looks at it so long and so well that he becomes an artist and paints it. The other boy only saw some stray clouds and ordinary colors, and it had no relation to his life. It is a wonderful part of life to be able to see, not just look but look through, and see

what others do not see. To use what has come to your eyes and think about what you see makes your world larger and brighter and makes you larger and brighter too. Jesus loved everything his heavenly Father had made. That made him love his world and delight to be out in it. He watched the birds as they built their nests and stood on the limbs and sang their songs. It was his music and helped to make the joy of his life. The last thing he would think of would be to destroy their nests. That is the last thing any boy should think of. To rob the birds' nests and break up their little home and break their little hearts, is too cruel a sport for any boy to engage in. Jesus watched them bring the sticks and lay them in the narrow crotch of the tree, then bring the smaller pieces and splinters, and afterward the bits of leaves and grass, and finally the feathers, and place them so skilfully in that circle, while keeping it hollow in the center, and then smoothing it all out by rubbing their own feathery breasts around it again and again. That is such a marvelous piece of work that even a boy could not do it. A bird can do what a boy could not do. Even a man can build a house, but must leave the bird to build her own nest. Jesus watched them making their home for the little birds and saw them flying about so free and happy. Their breath was a song. He wondered and thought. He never forgot it, for in other years he said to a great crowd of people, "Listen; watch the

The Boy Jesus

birds and live in their world. They are not worried and always fretting. They live so happy and so peaceful. They do not gather into barns and storehouses a great quantity of food, but each day your heavenly Father feeds them. You are better than the birds and he will care for you too."

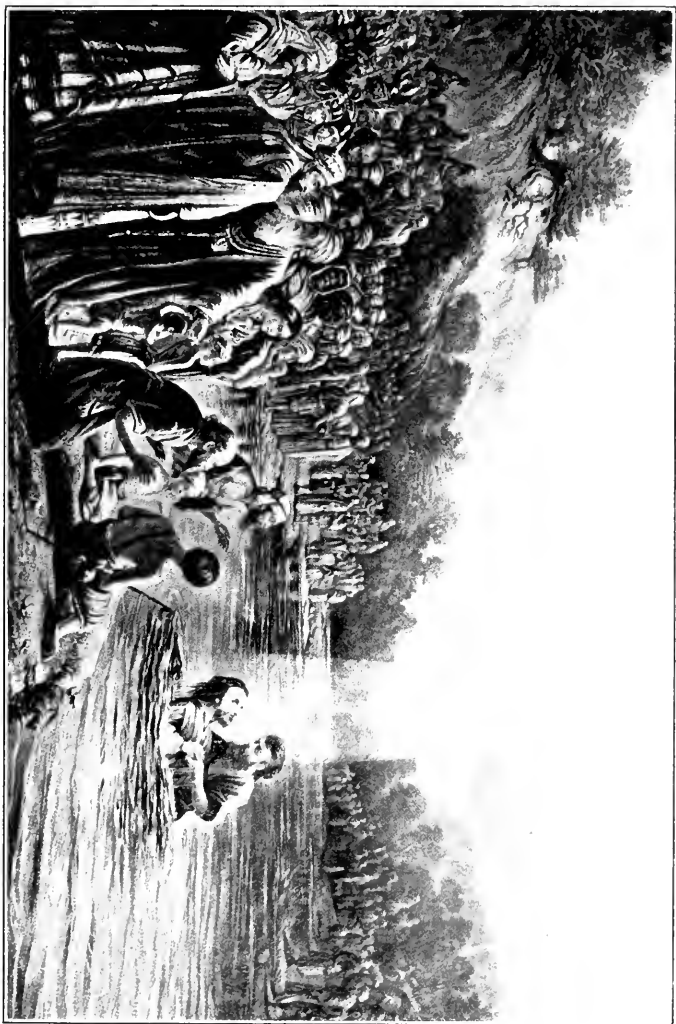
The boy Jesus carried the music of his world in his heart. His was always a smiling face and a happy heart. No boy ever knew how to laugh as well as he. He was skilled above all others in this. It must have made others happy to hear him laugh. He had such a cheerful disposition that everybody liked to be with him. This is the kind of boys we like to be with and call our friends. Nobody likes a sour boy. Everybody wants a companion who knows how to laugh and is always looking on the bright side and running over with good cheer. All nature smiled for Jesus and he smiled back. The boy who looks like a cup of vinegar or a little corner of a thunder-cloud is the one whom every other boy keeps at a distance; but a cheerful, happy boy who loves his world, makes a good time everywhere and out of everything, is the one whom others like to get near and to rub against. Jesus was that kind of a boy. His face was the home of smiles, radiant and beautiful with the light of heaven upon it, but he remembered the great lessons of life and saw them in everything and thrust them deep into his own life. He pushed these great truths into others.

He must have been very anxious to get to the seashore and to see that great stretch of water without any other shore. He had heard about it, and from the highest hill back of Nazareth he had seen what it was in the distance. How interesting it must have been for him when his father took him on that journey from their home to the Mediterranean Sea! Along the roadway are very many interesting things to see. All these helped to shorten the way for Jesus, but when they came around Mount Carmel, and heard the roar of the waves, he could hardly wait to get there and see what he had dreamed about. A storm was on and this made it more interesting and exciting than it would have been otherwise. The breakers were rolling in like small mountains of water. The huge rocks were being pounded by this mighty hammer. It seemed as if the sea in its rage would break through the barriers and run wild over the land. This ceaseless thunder and wonderful expanse of water was something new for Jesus, and always remained in his mind, for long afterward he told a story of the storm and two men who had built their houses on the seashore. One of them built his house on the solid rocks, and the foundation was so secure that the winds howled about it and the storm in its fury and madness beat upon it, but it could not be moved. After the waves had done their work it stood unharmed and unshaken. The other man built his house on the sand of the shore—a

The Boy Jesus

shallow, moving foundation. When the storm came upon his house it fell in a great heap of ruins. Of course it would fall. Everybody expected that it would, foolish man! Jesus said that was just what men were doing often in life. They hear the truth but do not build upon it. The storms easily wreck the house. The man who builds on a rock is the safe and successful man.

The boy who looks at his world and learns to love it and gathers life's lessons out of every part of it, lives in it just as the boy Jesus did, and that makes a better world and a better boy.



THE BAPTISM OF JESUS

ÆIII

“This is My Beloved Son”



HE time had come! The great secret must be out! Jesus had lived his boy life and grown to be a young man. Now the world was to know the meaning of his wonderful life and discover him to be more than others. When Jesus had reached this hour in his life he went from his home a long distance through the hills and across the valleys to the river Jordan.

Here he found a crowd of people and great excitement. Something very unusual was happening. Thousands of people were here from every part of the country. A great preacher had come out of the wilderness and out of his hidden life. He was strangely dressed, just a rough camel's hair cloak, and girdle of leather to hold it about him. He had been living a long time among the caves and the hills. He had eaten locusts and wild honey. But he was God's servant. God was looking after him and preparing him for a great service—the greatest work anybody could do. Every one says so who reads the story to its end. He

The Boy Jesus

must have seemed very strange with his long hair and long beard and stern look. He was a true hero and did not fear any one or anything. He was only anxious to serve God in the highest way. With his courageous and earnest look there were gentleness and love mingled. The people were not driven away from him. They were drawn toward him. They saw his noble purpose and were anxious to hear his last word. His preaching was all against their sin, and then he called them to repentance and to God. The crowds pushed their way toward him through the bushes and the hedges and over the rocks and pebbles. The river was only a narrow stream, but it carried all the water from the large lake of Galilee down into the Dead Sea. It had to run with swiftness and dash its way over the stones and every obstruction and whirl around the corners. Sometimes it plunged down and on as if it was mad, all white with foam. The bank of this river was the pulpit for this strange minister. Just where there was a bend in the river and the water was quiet, he called them to him and told them that God asked them to show their repentance and love for him by coming down into the water and being baptized.

One day while he stood there in the center of the thousands of people, he suddenly stopped preaching. There was a moment of startling silence! John, the great preacher, turned and looked intently in one direction. Then he solemnly raised his eyes heavenward

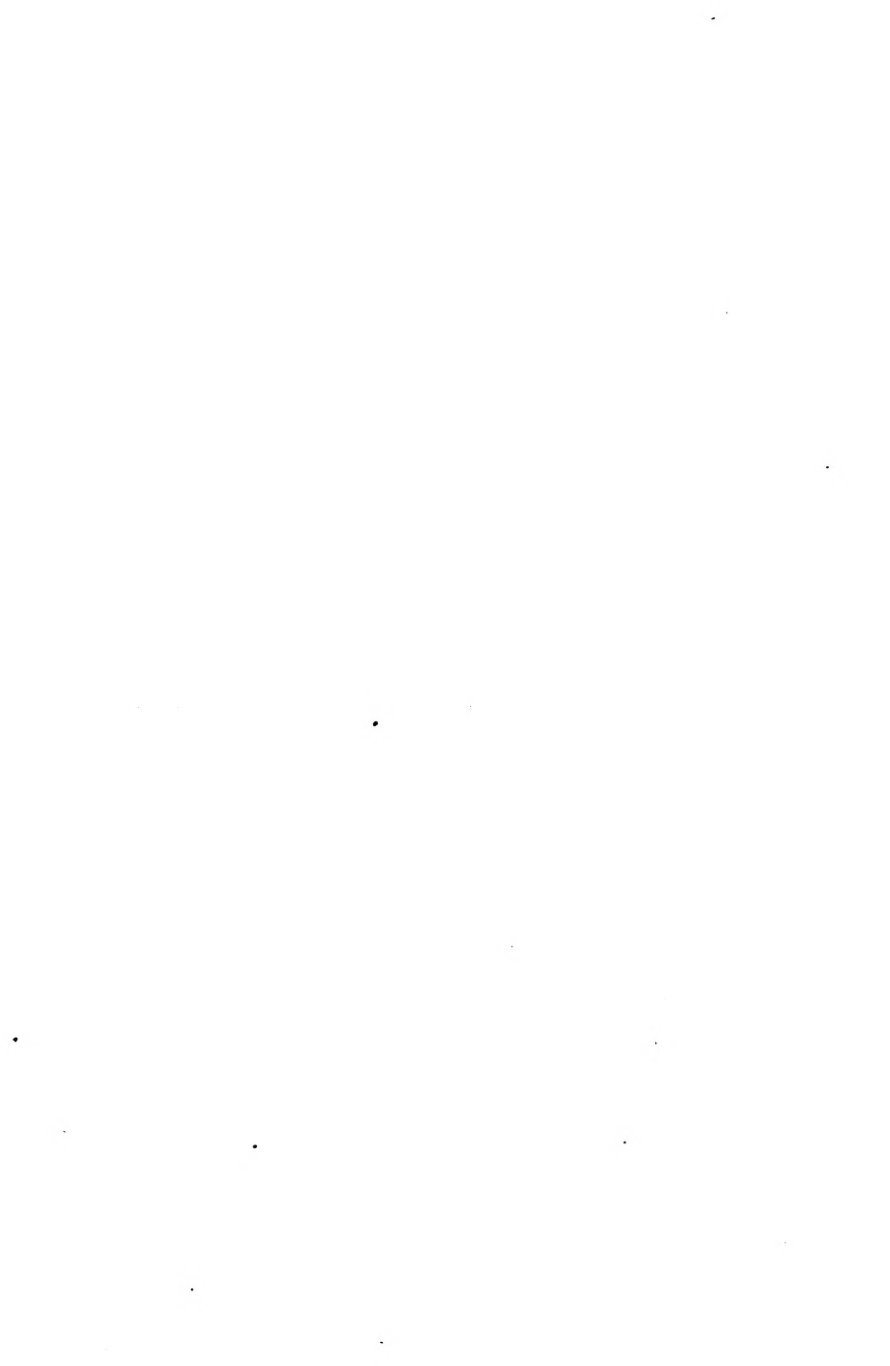
as if in gratitude for the discovery. Sometime afterward he looked again at this one who was coming toward him. He pointed to him and called to all the people to listen and to look. Then he said, “Behold the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world”! It was Jesus! But John had been expecting him and he knew him; some angel must have come and whispered to him “This is the One. He is the long-looked-for Saviour of the world. This is the Son of God, and this is the way for the world to know him.” How surprised and breathless they all must have been as their eyes were turned upon Jesus. His form and face and a something beyond explanation told them at least a part of the truth. When Jesus reached the side of John he said that he had come to be baptized too. John hesitated a moment and then replied that that could not be, because he himself should be baptized by Jesus. But Jesus knew what was best and what was the will of God for that important hour in his life. Then he said it must be. It was necessary. This was the sign of his saving work in the world. Everybody was still as death and getting anxious to know who he was, and to know more of the meaning of this new turn in those days of John’s preaching and power.

John reverently took hold of the hand of Jesus, and together they stepped upon the stony shore and the music of the rippling waves was made sweeter. When

they slowly walked down into the river, with every eye on them, the angels were at the windows of heaven. What a holy hour in this world's life that was. Never had angels or men seen anything like that. Possibly the starry worlds stopped for just a minute. There must have been silence everywhere while John prayed and then baptized Jesus.

Now comes the strangest, most wonderful part of it all. There was an opening made in the heavens, and something that looked to the people like a dove came and rested just above the head of Jesus. It was the symbol of the blessing of God, and that the Holy Spirit was his life. But this was not enough yet. They heard a voice from heaven which said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." This was the announcement that Jesus was the Son of God and the Saviour of the world. He had lived the years of his boy life, and into his young manhood in such truth and nobility that God could tell the world "He is worthy. I am well pleased in him." The boy life was a part of the plan for his whole life, and he lived it so as to perfectly please his Father in heaven.

Every boy should strive to make his life fit in God's plan so that he too could hear the voice from heaven, "This is my boy, in whom I am well pleased."



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